

2.5 A Residential Strategy

2.5.1 Goal: A Mixed-Use Neighborhood

Downtown Blacksburg becomes a new residential option offering a pedestrian-oriented urban lifestyle for young professionals and empty nesters seeking a lively alternative to traditional neighborhoods.

2.5.2 Background

The residential market in Blacksburg is growing rapidly particularly in the student housing market. These developments, typically large apartment complexes, have created conflict with older single family developments in town. Most residential development of any type in Blacksburg has been predominantly automobile oriented. The resulting traffic congestion exacerbates conditions in older established neighborhoods.

Downtown Blacksburg as a residential setting has changed over the years. Businesses have taken older single family homes in some locations while other homes have been “carved” into student apartments. In spite of these changes, Blacksburg retains charming neighborhoods close to the core of downtown. The core itself has tremendous potential for residential development. It offers the amenities and infrastructure to support creative residential types that are pedestrian oriented in mixed-use buildings.

The challenge for residential in downtown will be to create a residential market that appeals to young professionals and empty nesters and not simply the student market.

2.5.3 Assets/Opportunities

- Blacksburg has strong neighborhoods near downtown’s core.
- Downtown has some underutilized land that is “ripe” for *quality* residential mixed-use development.
- Downtown offers amenities that many people are looking for in a residential environment – walkable neighborhoods, restaurants, nightlife, and nearby institution such as churches and the Post Office.

2.5.4 Liabilities/Challenges

- The “path of least resistance” is to appeal strictly to the student market which is always in demand.

- Many residents have a perception that downtown is not a desirable residential location.

2.5.5 Objectives

- A. Develop “New Town” as a mixed-use residential community.
- B. Encourage residential in-fill development throughout downtown Blacksburg.
- C. Encourage upper floor residential, especially along the fronts of new parking resources.
- D. Explore residential development opportunities on vacant and underutilized sites within walking distance of downtown.
- E. Develop creative urban design standards for downtown residential.

2.5.6 Action Strategies

Demonstration Projects – 2001-2002

- *Work with owners of New Town property on a joint development plan.* Two key owners control the bulk of the “New Town” property illustrated in Exhibit 16 on the following page. The Town of Blacksburg should begin discussions with these property owners on a more detailed master plan for the site.
- *Establish Urban Design standards for new developments.* Residential development in Blacksburg can be a contentious issue especially when a property owner is considering a higher density development. The Town should consider providing an incentive for quality urban design by linking that with density bonuses. This would encourage creative design while providing for more housing options in the core of downtown.

Next Steps – 2002 and Beyond

- *Develop New Town Residential.* Exhibit 17 shows the potential development of New Town in perspective form. The exhibit also illustrates the type of housing envisioned for this site. This would be a phased project that would involve a mix of uses. The first phase would include townhouses and walk up flats along a re-aligned Giles Road. The second (and more long-term) phase would be the redevelopment of the suburban style restaurants at the intersection of Prices Fork and Main Street into a more urban office, commercial, residential complex.

Exhibit 16: Plan View of New
Town

[Click here to see Exhibit 16](#)

Exhibit 17: Perspective Sketch of
New Town

[Click here to see Exhibit 17](#)

- *Develop South End Residential.* Exhibit 18 shows additional residential development through the south end of downtown. This development could be new townhouses as is the case on Church Street or new upper floor residential located above retail on Main Street. Residential possibilities could be creatively explored in partnership with educational uses in the old Blacksburg Middle School site or adjacent to it.
- *Develop Core Area Residential.* Exhibit 18 shows additional residential development throughout the core area of downtown. This development will primarily be second and third floor residential “lofts” and student housing that would be located on the campus of Virginia Tech.

Exhibit 18: Potential
Residential Development
Projects in the Core area and
South End.

[Click here to see Exhibit 18](#)